

MARVEL

002

**WALKER
BLAKE
MENYZ**

**LUKE
CAGE**



While imprisoned for a crime he did not commit, **Luke Cage** was subjected to medical experiments that gave him superhuman strength and bulletproof skin. Once free, he used his abilities to become a Hero for Hire, protecting people who had nowhere else to turn. His mission has taken him to Wakanda, the Savage Land, even Avengers Mansion, but Luke has never forgotten where he came from.

The man who gave Luke his powers, Dr. Noah Burstein, is dead. At the funeral in New Orleans, Luke met Dr. Lenore Mornay--Burstein's assistant--and Cyril Morgan--a wealthy man whose son Burstein saved with the process he used on

Luke. But the cure carried a curse: violent rage that must be suppressed with drugs. While driving Luke to his hotel, Dr. Mornay's car was run off the road by a super-strong man in a gas mask with a sword that cut Luke's bulletproof skin like butter. As Luke lost consciousness, the last face he saw was Burstein's first test subject, former contract killer Mitchell Tanner, A.K.A. Warhawk.



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OUTSIDE NEW ORLEANS.

DON'T
YOU DIE ON
ME, CAGE!

YOU HEAR
ME?!

AND DON'T
YOU GET BLOOD
ALL OVER MY
BACK SEAT.

MITCHELL TANNER
DOESN'T WANT ME
TO DIE, BUT THAT'S
TOO BAD...

...BECAUSE THAT'S
WHAT'S HAPPENING.

I'M DYING.

DYING IN THE BACK SEAT
OF A CAR DRIVEN BY A
LUNATIC I AIN'T SEEN
IN YEARS.

STOP...UNGH...
TALKING...

I'M
JUST SAYIN'--
BLOODSTAINS ARE
REALLY HARD TO
CLEAN.

UNLESS...

...MAYBE THIS IS
ALL A DREAM.

NO. THE PAIN
IS TOO REAL.

HOLD ON--
WE'RE ALMOST
THERE.



HIS BREATH STINKS.

IT SMELLS LIKE HOT GARBAGE.

NOT SURE IF THIS WILL WORK, BUT I THINK I CAN CAUTERIZE THE WOUNDS AND STOP THE BLEEDING.

WHAT... WHAT'RE YOU...

DON'T WORRY, I SAW BURSTEIN USE THIS ONCE. SHOULDN'T BE TOO HARD.



THE PAIN AND THE SMELL OF HIS BREATH--THAT'S HOW I KNOW IT'S NOT A DREAM.

THIS WILL PROBABLY HURT.

BUT YOU'RE LUKE CAGE, SO...YOU KNOW... YOU GOT THIS.



ARRRGH!



AS I LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS, I HEAR...SINGING?

HUSH LITTLE BABY, DON'T SAY A WORD...



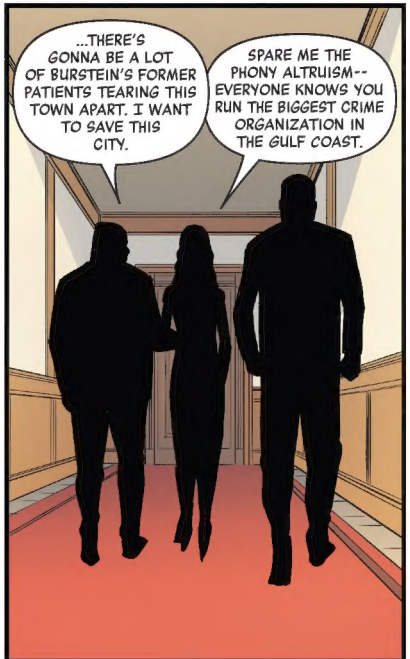
...PAPA'S GONNA BUY YOU A MOCKINGBIRD...



...AND IF THAT MOCKINGBIRD DON'T SING...



...PAPA'S GONNA BUY YOU A DIAMOND RING.





THIS ISN'T ABOUT BUSINESS! IT'S ABOUT FAMILY!

BURSTEIN TURNED MY SON INTO A TICKING PSYCHO TIME BOMB!



I'M SORRY--I TRULY AM. BURSTEIN WENT TOO FAR.

BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW TO HELP YOU OR YOUR SON.



YOU WORKED WITH HIM AT THE CLINIC--WHERE HE RAN HIS EXPERIMENTS. YOU WERE PART OF IT ALL.

SO NOW YOU FIGURE OUT HOW TO STOP BURSTEIN'S PROCESS FROM TURNING MY SON INTO SOME \$%#@ LUNATIC LIKE THAT BASTARD WARHAWK, OR SO HELP ME--



INTIMIDATING ME WON'T WORK, MR. CORELLO.

YES, I WORKED WITH DR. BURSTEIN. AND MAY GOD FORGIVE ME, I KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING--BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW HE DID IT.

MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROCESS AND THE TREATMENT ARE MINIMAL.



THEN FIGURE IT OUT.

OR I'LL KILL YOU, BUT NOT BEFORE KILLING EVERYONE YOU CARE ABOUT.



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GET STARTED IS IN HERE.

GET TO WORK.

WHAT IS... HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT I'LL NEED?

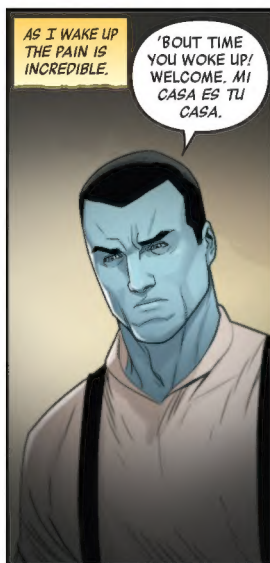
YOU THINK BURSTEIN GOT EVERYTHING HE NEEDED FOR HIS NASTY LITTLE EXPERIMENTS BY CLICKING HIS HEELS AND WISHING ON A FALLING STAR?



SLAM

FIGURE OUT HOW TO FIX MY SON.





AS I WAKE UP
THE PAIN IS
INCREDIBLE.

'BOUT TIME
YOU WOKE UP/
WELCOME. MI
CASA ES TU
CASA.



I USE IT TO CONCENTRATE MY
FOCUS--GET DOWN TO BUSINESS.

LOOK,
YOU CRAZY...
LUNGE...

WASN'T
SURE YOU'D
MAKE IT. CUT
UP BAD--
BLEEDING
OUT.



POINT
ME...

DAMN--THIS
HURTS.

...POINT
ME IN
THE DIRECTION
OF WHOEVER
DID THIS.

YOU
SHOULD THANK
ME...



...I
SAVED YOUR
LIFE, LITTLE
BROTHER.

DON'T
CALL ME
THAT.

MITCHELL TANNER, CALLS
HIMSELF WARHAWK. HE
THINKS OF ME AS HIS
LITTLE BROTHER.

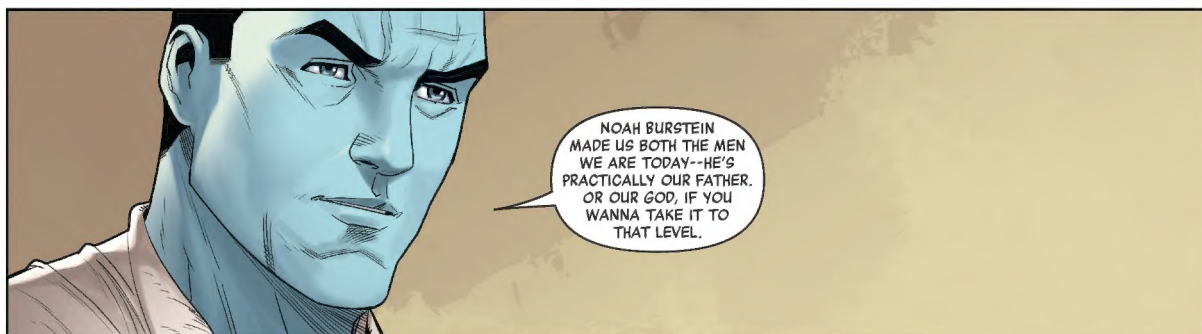


I AIN'T YOUR
BROTHER.

HIS BEING HERE TELLS
ME THERE'S MORE TO
BURSTEIN'S DEATH THAN
WHAT I'VE BEEN TOLD.



WHY ARE
YOU HERE,
TANNER?



NOAH BURSTEIN
MADE US BOTH THE MEN
WE ARE TODAY--HE'S
PRACTICALLY OUR FATHER.
OR OUR GOD, IF YOU
WANNA TAKE IT TO
THAT LEVEL.



I SEE THAT
WHATEVER YOU'RE
HUFFING OVER THERE
HAS TURNED YOU INTO
SOME KIND OF
PHILOSOPHER...

...BUT SPARE
ME THE ALL-MEN-
ARE-BROTHERS
NONSENSE,
TANNER.



FINE, BUT YOU
COULD STILL SHOW
SOME GRATITUDE FOR ME
SAVING YOUR LIFE, BECAUSE
FOR A MAN WITH UNBREAKABLE
SKIN YOU WERE BLEEDING
LIKE A STUCK PIG.

YOU USED
THIS THING TO
CLOSE UP MY
WOUNDS...

...WHAT
IS IT?



YOU MIGHT
WANT TO PUT
THAT DOWN. CAN'T
REMEMBER THE REAL
NAME, SO I JUST CALL
IT THE CUT-THROUGH-
ANYTHING-THING.



YOU'RE
KIDDING.

"THE
CUT-THROUGH-
ANYTHING
THING"?



THAT'S WHAT
IT DOES, AND IT'S EASIER
TO REMEMBER THAN THE
WHATEVER-YOU-REALLY-
CALL-IT.

WANT SOME
RAVIOLI?

BURSTEIN
GAVE IT TO ME FOR
SAFEKEEPING. IT'S
A PROTOTYPE...



"...LIKE THE BLADE THAT
CARVED YOU UP LIKE A
THANKSGIVING TURKEY.

"ONLY THE BLADE IS
MORE REFINED. BEEN
TRYING TO GET MY
HANDS ON ONE."



TELL ME ABOUT THE BLADE. WHAT IS IT? WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

THEY MADE IT.

"THEY"?



YES, "THEY."

THEY AS IN "THEM."

"THEM" AS IN "THEY WHO DO THE THINGS THAT THEY DO, AS ONLY PEOPLE LIKE THEM CAN DO IT."

SURE YOU DON'T WANT ANY RAVIOLI?



STOP WITH THE CRAZY TALK, WARHAWK. I WANT ANSWERS--NOT JUST ABOUT THE BLADE.

WHO ATTACKED ME AND DR. MORNAY? WHERE DID THEY TAKE HER?



WHATEVER BURSTEIN'S BEEN UP TO, HE GOT IN OVER HIS HEAD.

WHAT AREN'T YOU TELLING ME?



SO MANY QUESTIONS. I CAN'T KEEP TRACK OF THEM ALL.

IN THE OLD BRAIN IT'S EITHER A CATEGORY TEN HURRICANE OR THE AFTERMATH. THE BOMB BEING DROPPED, OR SIFTING THROUGH THE RUBBLE. MAKES CONCENTRATING DIFFICULT.

IF BURSTEIN WERE HERE, HE COULD EXPLAIN.



THE MEN WHO ATTACKED YOU--WHO TOOK THE LADY--THEY WANT WHAT OUR FATHER GAVE TO YOU.

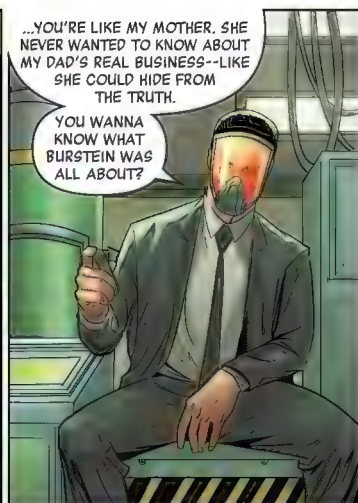
MITCHELL... **WARHAWK**, YOU'RE NOT MAKING SENSE.

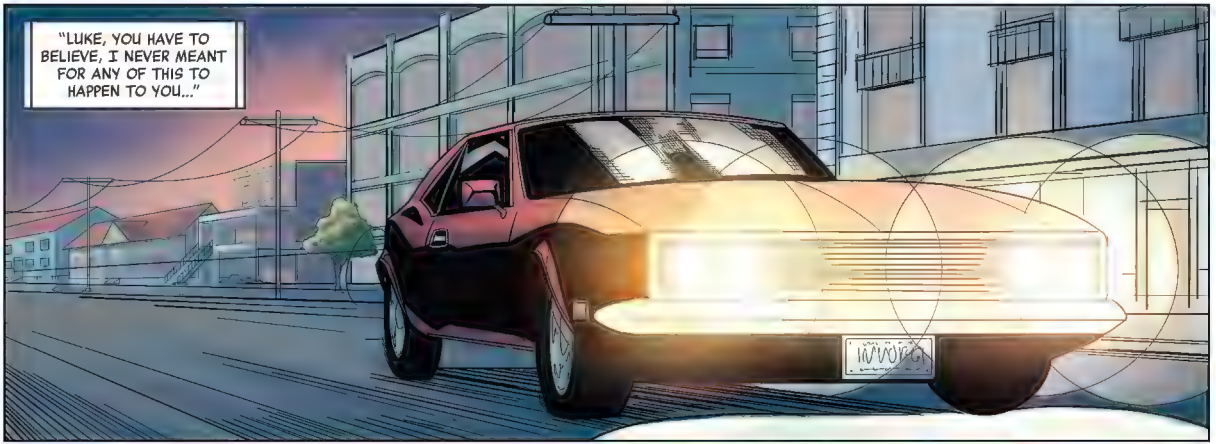
YOU'RE THE PERFECT SON, LITTLE BROTHER. I'M BROKEN. SO BROKEN--LIKE THE OTHERS, ONLY WORSE. HE HAS SO MANY SONS, BUT ONLY YOU **ARE** PERFECT.



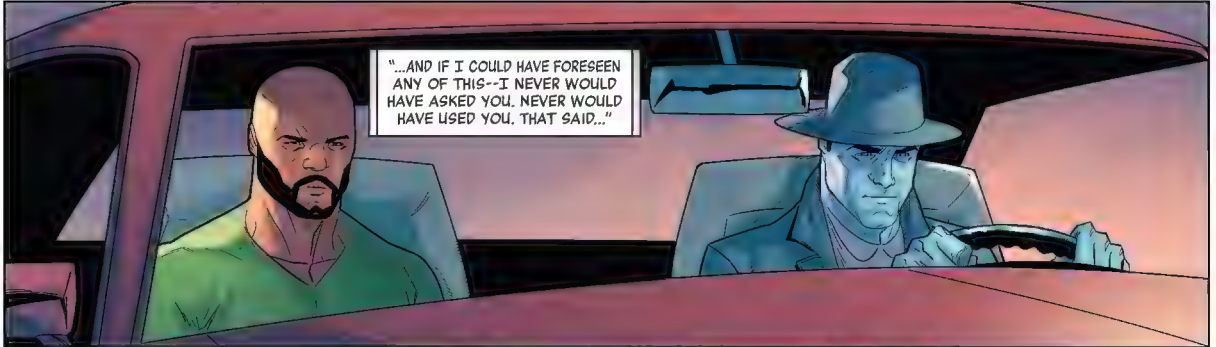
OTHERS? DR. MORNAY SAID SOMETHING ABOUT THE OTHERS. WHAT OTHERS?







"LUKE, YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE, I NEVER MEANT FOR ANY OF THIS TO HAPPEN TO YOU..."



"...AND IF I COULD HAVE FORESEEN ANY OF THIS--I NEVER WOULD HAVE ASKED YOU, NEVER WOULD HAVE USED YOU. THAT SAID..."



...I'M A BIT DISAPPOINTED IN YOU, SON.

DISAPPOINTED? LOOK AT ME, DOC.

I'M A STRAIGHT-UP SUPER HERO. JUST LIKE ALL THOSE OTHER GUYS RUNNIN' AROUND IN MASKS AND TIGHTS--ONLY I'M HERE ON THE STREETS, PROTECTING EVERYDAY PEOPLE.

THAT'S NOT TRUE...



...YOU'RE HIRED MUSCLE. NO BETTER THAN A MERCENARY, SELLING OUT TO WHOEVER MEETS YOUR PRICE.

LISTEN TO ME, CARL...

THE NAME IS LUKE NOW.

FINE. LUKE. JUST LISTEN...



"...YOU ARE MORE THAN A TEST SUBJECT--YOU'RE LIKE A SON TO ME, LUKE.

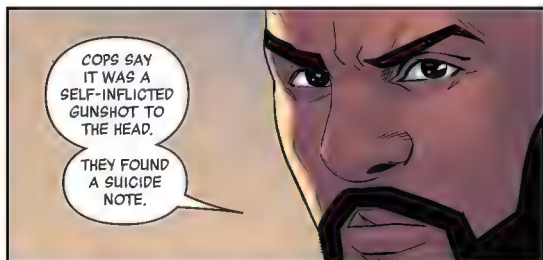
"AND I EXPECT MORE FROM YOU. THE EXPERIMENT YOU WERE PART OF WAS AN ACCIDENT THAT SHOULD HAVE KILLED YOU, BUT IT GAVE YOU POWER AND GREATNESS.

"DON'T LET ALL OF THAT GO TO WASTE."



YOU
REALLY THINK
BURSTEIN IS
ALIVE?

DON'T
KNOW ABOUT
ALIVE--BUT HE
DIDN'T KILL
HIMSELF.



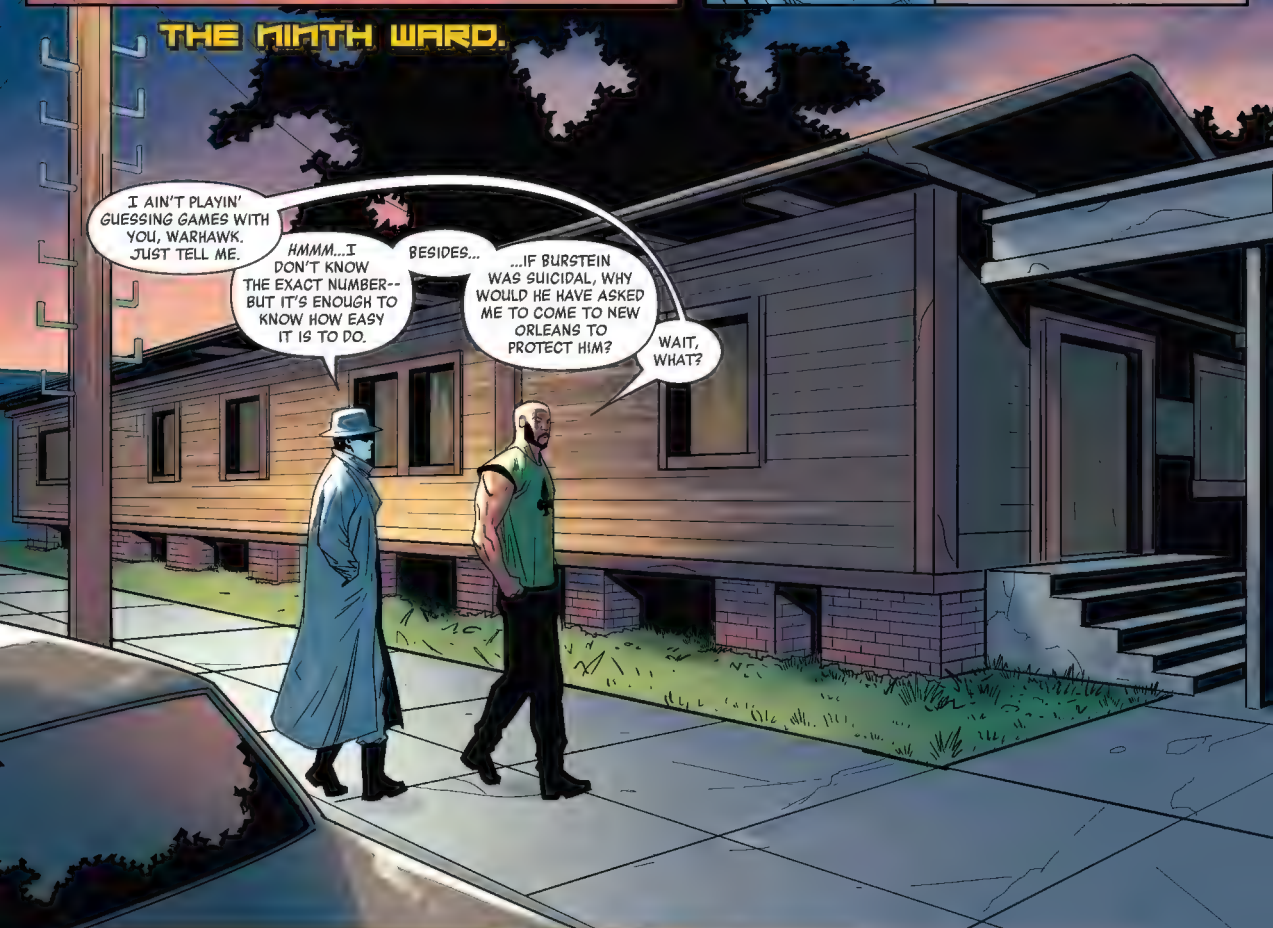
COPS SAY
IT WAS A
SELF-INFLICTED
GUNSHOT TO
THE HEAD.

THEY FOUND
A SUICIDE
NOTE.



YOU KNOW
HOW MANY PEOPLE
I KILLED IN THE BAD
OLD DAYS AND MADE
IT LOOK LIKE A
SUICIDE?

THE NINTH WARD.



I AIN'T PLAYIN'
GUESSING GAMES WITH
YOU, WARHAWK.
JUST TELL ME.

HMMM...I
DON'T KNOW
THE EXACT NUMBER--
BUT IT'S ENOUGH TO
KNOW HOW EASY
IT IS TO DO.

BESIDES...

...IF BURSTEIN
WAS SUICIDAL, WHY
WOULD HE HAVE ASKED
ME TO COME TO NEW
ORLEANS TO
PROTECT HIM?

WAIT,
WHAT?



THE HELL'RE
YOU TALKIN'
ABOUT?

I DON'T
LIKE TO BE
TOUCHED.

TOO BAD.
PROTECTING
BURSTEIN FROM
WHO?





KEEEEEVIN--I'M NOT HERE FOR A FIGHT. I CAME TO INTRODUCE YOU TO YOUR OLDER BROTHER, LUKE.



AND I COME BEARING A GIFT.

SOMEONE IN THE FAMILY'S GOTTA HAVE A USE FOR THIS--AND I KNOW YOU'VE GOTTA BE RUNNING OUT.



FIRST, YOU EVER DO ME LIKE THAT AGAIN, WARHAWK-- I'LL BREAK MY FOOT OFF IN YOUR ASS.

SECOND, I'M GETTIN' TIRED OF FEELING LIKE THERE'S SOME BIG SECRET AND I'M NOT IN ON IT.

SO, STOP WITH THE CRAZY FOR A SECOND-- JUST LONG ENOUGH TO BREAK IT DOWN FOR ME.

YEAH, WARHAWK, BREAK IT DOWN FOR YOUR FRIEND.

TELL HIM THE TRUTH-- TELL HIM WHAT'S GOIN' ON.



FAMILY REUNION.



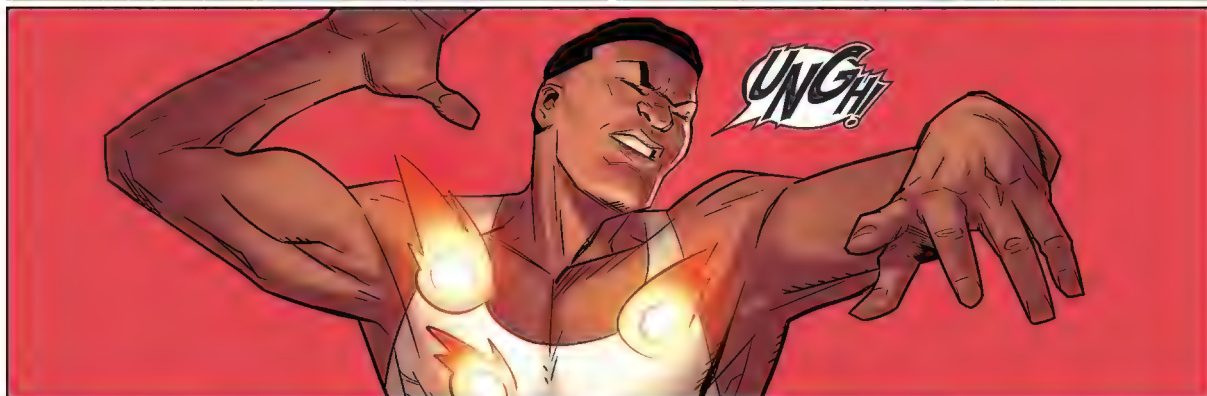
WE'RE NOT FAMILY!



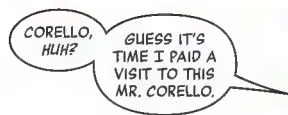
SURE WE ARE.

WE HAVE THE SAME FATHER.

ENOUGH...









HOW'S
IT GOING,
DOC?

I KEEP
TELLING YOU--
I'M NOT A CHEMIST.
AND I HAVE NO IDEA
EXACTLY WHAT
BURSTEIN WAS
DOING.

RIGHT NOW
I'M JUST GUESSING,
BASED SOLELY ON THE
MATERIALS YOU'VE
SUPPLIED.



THOSE ARE THE
MATERIALS BURSTEIN HAD ME
SUPPLYING HIM. THE HYDROGEN
CYANIDE WAS EASY TO GET--BUT
THAT EXPERIMENTAL TRANQUILIZER
DEVELOPED BY THE
MILITARY?

FUJGETABOUTIT--
THAT STUFF COST
ME A FORTUNE. GOOD
THING MONEY WASN'T
A PROBLEM FOR OLD
DOC BURSTEIN.



MR. CORELLO,
I DON'T KNOW
IF THIS IS THE RIGHT
MIXTURE OR NOT.
EVERYTHING I'M
DOING IS GUESSWORK.
THIS MAY WORK.
IT MAY NOT.

ONLY
ONE WAY TO
FIND OUT.



HERE'S TO
SWIMMIN' WITH
BOWLEGGED
WOMEN.



IT FEELS
DIFFERENT...NOT
LIKE THE OTHER
STUFF.

FRANKIE,
MAYBE YOU
SHOULD PUT
YOUR MASK BACK
ON...JUST
IN CASE.



NO!

WHAT
DID YOU DO
TO HIM? HE'S...
CHANGING!

IT...
HURTS SO.
AARRRRGH!!!

EVERY PERSON THAT DR. NOAH BURSTEIN EXPERIMENTED ON ENDED UP WITH PROBLEMS-- EITHER THEY DIED OR THEY WENT CRAZY.

I'M THE EXCEPTION. I DIDN'T DIE. I DIDN'T GO INSANE. I BECAME A SUPER HERO.



AT LEAST I NEVER THOUGHT I WAS CRAZY.

MITCHELL, SLOW DOWN!

GROW A PAIR, WOULD YA?

WE'VE GOT LIVES TO SAVE!

NOW I CAN'T BE SO SURE, BECAUSE IF FOLLOWING MITCHELL TURNER INTO BATTLE ISN'T CUCKOO-FOR-COCOA-PUFFS CRAZY...

DON'T TELL ME TO GROW A PAIR.

I HAVE A PAIR.

THEN ACT LIKE IT.

...I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS.



BE COOL, WARHAWK. NO KILLING! LET'S DO THIS NICE AND PEACEFUL-LIKE.





A comic book panel depicting a tense moment between two characters. On the left, a man with a pale, almost white complexion and glowing yellow eyes is lunging forward. He is wearing a white tank top and dark pants, with his shirt partially torn. On the right, a bald man in a black and green suit is seen from the back, reaching out with his right hand towards the first character. The background features a building with several windows and a white pillar. The sky is a deep blue.

...THAT IS
CRAZY.

YOU'RE ALL
DEAD!

TO BE CONTINUED!

POWER MAIL

Send us your letters at mheroes@marvel.com and mark them "okay to print"!

Mateo Corello, we hardly knew ye. But if you gotta go, getting crushed on the windshield of a sweet muscle car isn't the worst way. Hello, LUKE CAGE fans! It's me--morbid Assistant Editor Kathleen, here to introduce David F. Walker, who kindly agreed to answer this inaugural batch of LUKE CAGE fan mail. Take it away, David!

Just got done reading the first issue and am very pleased with this book. I like how you are incorporating parts of Luke's past (Dr. Noah Burstein) into the story while also building a new mythos with the introduction of Luke's brother, Mitchell Tanner. The story definitely had the feel of the old POWER MAN book from the '70s. Can't wait to see where this story goes...

Also, very cool to see a book written by an old-school comic fan. I was 10 years old and picking up my comics at the local corner grocery store in 1976.

BTW: What are you going to name the letter column? Power Mail? Caged Mail?

Best Wishes,
Michael Newell

If you want a real blast from the past, check out the original POWER MAN AND IRON FIST series, issues #76 and #83--both feature Mitchell Tanner. He's a character with an incredible connection to Luke, and I've been waiting for years for someone to explore it.

Thank you, David, for giving me the Luke Cage comic I've been waiting for. Luke Cage is one of my favorite comic book heroes, and he's long overdue for a proper story arc. Also, Nelson's art complements the story well. It appears that the stars have aligned for a phenomenal run. I'm excited to watch this story unfold!

Trey Squire

P.S. Keep Rahzzah around! The cover is absolutely phenomenal! That alone is worth the price!

Between Nelson's interiors and Rahzzah's covers, I'm feeling like we're doing

something special. And the variant covers have been great as well. My only complaint about Rahzzah's covers is that he's making Luke look a bit like me, only I'm so out of shape it is making me self-conscious.

Hey,

I really enjoyed David F. Walker's scripting on the recently ended PM&IF. So it's like Sweet Christmas has come again with David's LUKE CAGE. The vibe is decidedly different to the more comedic tone enhanced by Sanford Greene's indie art on the former maxi-series.

Nelson Blake II has a more conventional super hero style to suit the darker tone that David is aiming for here. The rain-soaked funeral (they rarely take place in sunshine) of Dr. Noah Burstein adds to the funereal feeling of foreboding, as does the mysterious man in the shadows. Other writers would have kept us in the dark over the identity for a number of issues, but the reveal that this is Mitchell Tanner, "the complete homicidal maniac," demonstrates that this comic isn't going to do the obvious.

A couple of scenes stood out for me: Luke's dynamic movement dispatching dudes descending the staircase on the second page and the superb flashback to his magnificent afro. The only thing missing was a blast of Curtis Mayfield or Isaac Hayes. Which brings us neatly to David's reference to the legendary Jimmy Cliff's excellent song and Jamaican gangster movie *The Harder They Come*.

Job well done with issue one!

Cheers,
Bruce Marsh
QNS KOF TTB
Newbury Park
England

Don't get me started on *The Harder They Come*. Jimmy Cliff's soundtrack (and acting), Perry Henzell's direction--we're talking a true classic. And while we're on the subject of 1970s cinema and soundtracks, the opening scene of issue #1 works best if played with Isaac Hayes' "Theme from Truck Turner." I also listened to Marvin Gaye's

soundtrack for *Trouble Man* while writing this issue.

David

Thanks again, David! And Bruce, I'm glad you got David started, because *The Harder They Come* looks amazing. Other amazing things: 1. The picture below, of Netflix's *Luke Cage*, Mike Colter, holding an issue of Genndy Tartakovsky's *CAGE!* miniseries, which we take to be an enthusiastic, personal endorsement of the comic you hold in your hands!!! 2. Rahzzah's cover to *LUKE CAGE* #3, out next month! 3. All of you who wrote in, and all of you who plan to do so next time!

See you then!
Kathleen

